

HEALTH ACTIVATED Q&A

University of Virginia



When it comes to building a strong culture of health at the University of Virginia (UVA), there's no substitute for face time. We caught up with the UVA's Wellness Program Manager, Shana Pack, and Wellness Coordinator, Erin Erickson, to learn more about the steps they're taking to make Hoo's Well a smashing success.

Q1 What is the University of Virginia Hoo's Well program all about?

A1 Now in its fifth year, Hoo's Well is a comprehensive wellness program for University of Virginia employees and their spouses, and is connected to the self-funded health plan. It not only offers programming to help individuals know more about their current health status and how to make improvements, but also provides strategies to support better health and well-being through every stage of life for its 20,000 members. Hoo's Well provides both on-site and virtual activities, as well as educational materials and resources.

Q2 What's been your favorite wellness challenge and what made it successful?

A2 One of our favorite and most successful challenges has been the Fitbit giveaway in conjunction with our Spring Fitness Challenge. We handed out 9,336 Fitbits to UVA health plan members and their spouses to help them stay motivated, engaged and actively tracking their steps. The giveaway coincided with our fitness challenge which offers incentives to employees who track 52 workouts consisting of 30 minutes of exercise or 5,000 steps in a 90 day time frame. Health plan subscribers and their spouses covered by the plan could each earn \$100 by completing the challenge.

Participation was off the charts! More than 9,300 people took part in the challenge, and all had finished at least one workout, logging a total of 4,739,974 minutes and more than 2.6 billion steps! People were genuinely excited to connect with coworkers, friends and family in some friendly competition.

Q3 What is your secret to engagement?

A3 The success of our programs stems from building a strong culture of health to drive employee engagement. We're in the trenches all day, every day — attending meetings, promoting the program and connecting face-to-face with as many people as we can. We also utilize many platforms to get the word out, from grass roots marketing to social media to tapping into a network of wellness champions who act as liaisons across the university, advocating for the program and acting as resources to co-workers. Communication is key. We've also had great success with emails, delivering relatable information about our program and services in a highly visual way and then tracking the data and metrics to see what campaigns are working while making adjustments to those that aren't.

We couldn't scale to serve 19,000 people without our partners. We lean on internal teams and advocates like our biometric screening vendors, dietitians and counselors to support our program goals and get people involved.

Q4 UVA has a strong relationship with the community of Charlottesville. How has this engagement evolved from the university to now impacting the entire community population?

A4 We really try to share our program information and resources with employees as well as their spouses. Wellness starts at home, so we loop in spouses whenever can and get them to participate. It's easier to stick with a plan when you have support from friends and family. This has the added benefit of trickling throughout the community. Another way we get our message to the community is by serving on coalitions. We work closely with the Charlottesville Department of Health to incorporate and complement our resources. By staying visible and active in the community, people hear about what we're doing and other companies in town get on board.

Q5 What's next for the Hoo's Well program?

A5 We have a few new offerings coming up. This year, we're going to kick it up a notch on our challenges. The required steps will increase from 5,000 to 6,000 and the reward will increase from \$100 to \$200 for the Spring Challenge and from \$480 to \$500 for the Fall Challenge. Even better, these rewards are available not only for eligible employees, but for their spouses as well.

We're also excited to announce that we're partnering with the Medical Center on an employee population health management initiative, Be Well. It will start as a pilot program with six physician practices and 1,000 UVA employees with the goal of helping members better manage chronic disease. Each employee will be connected with a physician, a disease management coach, a patient advocate and a pharmacist who will help them set an outcomes-based goal — for example, to quit smoking, lose weight or lower their blood glucose levels — for the chance to earn \$480. Our hope is this will transform the future of our program.

Lastly, we're restructuring internally to focus on three primary wellness dimensions: Physical Health, Social and Emotional Wellness, and Financial Fitness. We look forward to offering employees and their spouses more engagement opportunities in these focus areas this year.